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Subject: Weekly Update: Our work to improve transit



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Friends,

When we took office on Jan. 1, 2016, we encountered a transit system with real challenges. We've increased MATA's funding a couple of times since and have worked with its leadership to improve on-time performance from about 50 percent to roughly 75 percent for fixed-route buses. But we all agree there's much work ahead of us.

Our challenge in delivering better public transit service lies in our lack of density and large geographic size. The chart below compares us to cities with good public transportation systems (using round numbers).

	New York City	Chicago	Boston	Memphis
Population	8,600,000	2,700,000	673,000	652,000
Land size (sq miles)	302	234	48	315
Density (people per sq mile)	28,000	11,500	14,000	2,100

With high density, buses or trains in these other cities pick up multiple people at each stop. There are not many of the 4,800 bus stops in Memphis that have more than one person waiting, which makes operating an efficient system a challenge.

So we asked some of the best experts in the country to tell us how to make ours a more useful bus system and how to pay for it. The result is Transit Vision 3.0, a comprehensive report produced earlier this year. You can read that in-depth [here](#).

In short, we need about \$30 million more each year to give Memphis the kind of bus service it deserves. That's a challenge, considering our current annual share of MATA's funding is about \$28 million and our revenues, in a good year, only increase by about \$10 million each year. From that

increase, we have to do things like fund the state-mandated increase in pension funding, improve services, and address how we better pay employees.

I've charged our team and partners with identifying how we can get that additional \$30 million annually, and the work is ongoing. I'm very excited about County Mayor Lee Harris' stated goal of getting Shelby County involved in transit funding for the first time. That could be a real game-changer. And, as I shared with him when we had breakfast the week after his election, I stand ready to help make that happen.

I mention transit this week because I was part of a team that went to Washington, D.C., to meet Monday with U.S. Department of Transportation officials to seek grant money to improve MATA. Specifically, this grant would implement bus rapid transit service between Downtown and the University of Memphis — a meaningful piece of the overall picture to improve transit citywide.

I left Washington optimistic, just as I am optimistic that we will eventually identify the money we need to give Memphis the bus service it deserves.

Answering your questions: I appreciated the invitation from the Boxtown Neighborhood Association last Saturday to do a wide-ranging Q&A. We discussed how we've doubled street paving and increased library programming, and we talked about our plans to improve trash service and transit. I always enjoy hearing questions from Memphians about the core services they expect and deserve.

Thanks, TNTF1: I was happy to attend the second annual Employee Appreciation Block Party for the Memphis Fire Department earlier this week, where I spoke to two members of Tennessee Task Force 1, who helped out in Florida after the recent hurricane and saved two lives! Thank you -- and all of our first responders -- for your service.

Encouraging signs: The Memphis Shelby Crime Commission shared its quarterly update of crime statistics this week, and the numbers are encouraging: Compared to the same time frame in 2017, the homicide rate was down 17.6 percent and robberies were down 12.4 percent.

Just like I shared last week on a different topic, we are by no means satisfied with these numbers. There is so much more work to do. But we'd be foolish if we didn't acknowledge the positive direction.

Yours,



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